



Leadership Styles Identifying What Truly Resonates

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Abstract

The ever-changing technology and human behavior have awakened the leaders to change the way they lead their subordinates. This study aims to examine leaders' art of influencing their subordinates in the IT sector using transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and servant leadership styles, and to determine which best suits employees' job satisfaction in the IT industry. The study followed a causal research design with snowball sampling, approaching 400 respondents involved in the IT sector within Kathmandu Valley, and adopted quantitative measures to analyze the influence of leadership styles on job satisfaction. The multiple regression analysis revealed that servant leadership (SL) ($\beta = 0.494, p < 0.01$) most strongly predicted job satisfaction among IT professionals, followed by laissez-faire leadership (LSF) ($\beta = 0.233, p < 0.01$), transformational leadership (TF) ($\beta = 0.162, p < 0.01$), and transactional leadership (TR) ($\beta = 0.082, p < 0.01$). Servant leadership that promotes a sense of fellowship and independence and minimizes unnecessary interference appears to affect IT workers' satisfaction levels positively. However, policymakers, organizational leaders, and HR practitioners can use the study's evidence-based insights to develop more effective leadership development programs and foster more fulfilling, productive workplaces. This research makes a distinctive contribution to the limited empirical literature on leadership styles in Nepal's expanding IT industry.

Keywords: career orientations, cyber incivility, employee silence, freelance, virtual leadership.

Introduction

The growing number of high-profile scandals and underperformed leaders interests the researcher in an escalation in research on leadership and its theories. Leadership is a crucial functional mechanism for an organization to raise a culture of task completion and stability. Leaders' roles and organizational success depend on the leadership style practiced (Mwai et al., 2018). The leader's style can be enhanced through mindfulness practices that support better strategic decision-making. Many leaders are motivated to support their followers, but workable strategies and tools may not always be readily available (Urrila & Eva, 2024). Leadership in modern corporate entities has also undergone significant transformation (Karki & Maharjan, 2022). Recent developments in the economic and industrial scopes have brought shifts and imbalances in the global human capital market (Amri, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2021). Human resource management (HRM) faces certain challenges in satisfying its employees, which can be addressed through leaders and their leadership strategies and applications. The employees are

often career-oriented through ambitions and a proactive personality (Joshi et al., 2023). Technical knowledge and organized workflows frequently precede the necessity for visionary or interpersonal leadership in the IT industry. Choosing the right leadership style leads to higher job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2020; Luu, 2019; Sun & Xia, 2018). Job satisfaction has been linked to numerous external factors, such as leadership styles, which can affect employees' perceptions and attitudes about their work (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019). Job satisfaction can foster creativity and enhance employees' work experience and organizational outcomes (Abidakun & Ganiyu, 2020). Information Technology (IT) has become a tool of social & economic growth, spreading rapidly. The IT industry is complex and dynamic, requiring constant adaptation and innovation (Kolasani, 2023). Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, the Internet of Things, and augmented reality disrupt industries, revolutionize processes, and redefine business models (Bongomin et al., 2020; Pavaloaia & Necula, 2023). Improving the quality of relationships among staff and leaders is necessary to increase job satisfaction and commitment levels

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and ensure employees' good performance in the IT sectors (Uddin et al., 2016).

Literature review and hypothesis development

In remote work settings, Ahmad (2025) claimed that transformational leadership is most effective at raising employee motivation by fostering a supportive environment and an empowering culture. In contrast, transactional leadership leads to task-oriented, less emotionally engaged employees, while laissez-faire leadership results in feelings of disconnection and a lack of support. Manda and Abidin (2023) argued that leadership's role in managing information technology change is crucial in the ever-evolving digital era. The study found that TF and SL were significantly related to innovative individual behaviour, with empowerment and knowledge sharing as mediating factors (Suryanarayana, 2023). Servant leadership can trigger servant collegueship among subordinates (Khan et al., 2022).

TF positively impacts job satisfaction in the Information technology industry (Sunarsi et al., 2021). According to Putra (2024), TF is a solution to fixing companies; anxiety in an increasingly dynamic and disruptive business environment. Hermawan et al. (2024) found that TF positively influences organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction among SME employees in the digital era. A study from China demonstrates the role that entrepreneurial aberrant behaviour management and contingent rewards have in enabling IT-business process alignment, which in turn indirectly impacts talent retention and satisfaction (Wang et al., 2021). There is a strong positive relationship between TR and job satisfaction, though employee silence as a mediator indicated reduced job satisfaction (Alarabiat & Eyupoglu, 2022).

On account of the dynamic characteristics of the IT industry, LSF leaders are aware of their employees' knowledge and skill gaps. They can take appropriate approaches to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills (Karlsen & Berg, 2020). Chang (2017) found that LSF is significantly related to job satisfaction and improves job performance. Yang (2015), on the other hand, believed that LSF is not a lack of

leadership; it is a deliberate decision made by the leader to recognize and defer talents, reduce their dependence, and enhance their autonomy and self-determination. SL can trigger servant collegueship among subordinates (Khan et al., 2022). Leaders who practice SL put their employees' needs before their own. This style of leadership encourages employees to feel valued, invested, and empowered to do and make more. They tend to focus on serving others, sharing power and creating a sense of community (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018). In such way, McQuade et al. (2020) confirmed the correlation between the servant leadership model and employees' work attitudes and trust in the leader within the IT industry in India.

HA1: There is a significant impact of transformational leadership on job satisfaction among employees in the IT sector.

HA2: There is a significant effect of transactional leadership on job satisfaction

HA3: There is a significant influence of laissez-faire leadership on job satisfaction.

HA4: There is a significant relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

Methodology

The study has used positivist philosophy with a quantitative method to examine the impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction. Using a casual research design and snowball sampling techniques, 400 IT professionals who worked remotely or in person for private and public IT companies throughout the Kathmandu Valley has participated. Employees from software development companies, e-commerce, telecommunications companies, and enterprise IT departments (banks, hospitals, and airlines) participated in the study.

The appropriateness of the causal research design in this study is that it helps examine the cause-and-effect relationship between leadership styles and employee satisfaction. At the same time, snowball sampling is suitable for reaching a diverse pool of IT professionals across different organizations in the Kathmandu Valley, where direct sampling frames are difficult to obtain.

Supportive leadership fosters creativity, commitment, and better organizational outcomes in dynamic IT and corporate environments.

In remote and digital work settings, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire, and servant leadership have their own significance.

Using a causal research design and snowball sampling, 400 IT professionals from private and public IT organizations were included in the study.

Instrumentation of data

The study has adopted a framework from Specchia et al. (2021). Table 1 presents the study instruments, which use five-point Likert-scale questionnaires.

Table 1 Study Variables

Latent variables	Observed items	Adapted from
Transformational Leadership (TF)	4	Nasir et al. (2022)
Transactional Leadership (TR)	4	Marei, (2024)
Leissez- faire Leadership (LSF)	4	Northouse, (2009)
Servant leadership (SL)	4	Ehrhart, (2004)
Job Satisfaction (JS)	8	Bhatti et al. (2012)

The questionnaire variables were extracted from the above sources and were modified without changing the meaning of the questions. The variables are developed based on the following constructs.

Table 2 Constructs of Variables

Leadership Styles	Constructs	Source
Transformational	Idealized Influence, Inspirational motivation, Attributive Charisma	(Bass, 1990; Keim, 2014, Abera Timbula & Marvadi, 2024)
Transactional	Contingent rewards, Management by exception, Contingent rewards Management by exception	(Abera Timbula & Marvadi, 2024)
Leissez faire	Autonomy, delegation, and minimum supervision	(Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Khan & Saleem, 2021)
Servant	Authenticity, Accountability, and Forgiveness	(Harwardt, 2020)

Table 2 depicts the leadership styles and the constructs' significance in influencing organizational results and employee experiences. It discusses TF, which emphasizes encouraging, motivating, and directing people toward common objectives. While LSL reflects a hands-off approach with little supervision, TR emphasizes structured exchanges and performance monitoring. SL places a higher value on sincerity, responsibility, and consideration for others.

A pilot test was conducted in the study using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire with 20-30 respondents to assess the validity of the survey instrument. The instrument's reliability

was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (α), confirming the scale's items' dependability in accurately representing the variables studied. The research ensured validity by employing established, validated measurement scales from the existing literature, thereby confirming that the questionnaire accurately captured the relevant components.

Table 3 Reliability test

Latent variables	Observed items	Cronbach Alpha (α)
TF	4	0.832
TR	4	0.700
LSF	4	0.855
SL	4	0.813
JS	8	0.914

Suggested threshold scales ≥ 0.70 (Taber, 2018) developed instruments were from a pilot study.

Table 3 shows the reliability test conducted using Cronbach's alpha, where, according to Taber (2018), each construct exceeds the threshold of 0.70. Each leadership construct and job satisfaction were measured with internal consistency, as demonstrated by the reliability test, which means the measurement scales used in the study are consistently dependable. The reliability of the results is further supported by the consistency of the items used to assess each latent factor, indicating that they were well-designed.

The study used SPSS Version 26 to analyze data statistically, assuring reliable and accurate results. Descriptive analysis presents key characteristics and patterns of the collected

data. Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the variables, whereas regression analysis was used to analyze the influence and linkages between variables. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to evaluate multicollinearity. The regression model employed in the study is illustrated by Equation (1)

$$JS(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$$

JS = Job Satisfaction

X1 = Transformational Leadership (TF) X2 = Transactional Leadership (TR) X3 = Leissez- faire Leadership (LSF) X4 = Servant leadership (SL)

e = error term

Analysis and presentation

This part presents and analyzes the study results, demographics, correlation test, regression analysis, and findings.

Summary insight of demographic profile

The majority of respondents were male, mid-career

professionals with moderate work experience and bachelor’s degree level education. While on-site work remained the predominant working arrangement, a distinguished proportion of respondents also reported preference for hybrid work setups, reflecting evolving workplace dynamics in the IT sector.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics show high mean scores for all variables (4.11–4.28), indicating strong agreement among respondents. Variability is low (SD ≈ 0.58–0.62), suggesting consistent responses. Laissez-faire leadership has the highest mean, while transformational leadership shows slightly lower values, reflecting generally positive perceptions across all constructs.

Correlational analysis

The correlation analysis reveals that all leadership styles are strongly and positively associated with job satisfaction, with SL emerging as the most significant driver (r = .848), closely followed by LSF (r = .800) and TF (r = .765), and TR leadership with (r = .415), representing It workforce is not fully satisfied just through rewards and incentives.

Table 1 Correlation analysis

Pearson Correlation Insights			
TF	TR	LSF	SL
.340**			
.766**	.403**		
.803**	.375**	.830**	
.765**	.415**	.800**	.848**

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.873a	0.763	0.76	0.29547	0.763	317.585	4	395	0

- Predictors: (Constant), TF, TR, LSF, SL
- Dependent Variable: JS

Table 2 presents the regression model summary, which shows that the R-square value indicates the extent to which the independent latent variables explain a notable variation in job satisfaction among IT employees.

Table 3 Analysis of variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	110.903	4	27.726	317.585	0
Residual	34.484	395	0.087		
Total	145.387	399			

Notes:
 Dependent Variable: JS
 Predictors: (Constant), TF, TR, LSF, SL

Table 3 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA), which confirms that the overall regression model is statistically significant, indicating that the selected leadership variables meaningfully predict variations in job satisfaction.

Table 4 Regression coefficients

Var-iable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tol-er-ance	VIF
(Con-stant)	0.172	0.128		1.343	0.18		
TF	0.157	0.042	0.162	3.749	0	0.323	3.094
TR	0.085	0.028	0.082	3.036	0.003	0.832	1.201
LSF	0.227	0.046	0.233	4.985	0	0.275	3.631
SL	0.488	0.049	0.494	9.933	0	0.242	4.125

a. Dependent variable: JS

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients indicating how job satisfaction is expected to change with a one-unit increase in each leadership style. Each t-statistic confirms the importance of the characteristics in explaining virtual leadership effectiveness, as all p-values were significant at a 5 % significance level. Collinearity statistics (Tolerance and VIF) ensure that each trait contributes to the model independently and without redundancy, confirming the analysis’s stability and reliability. The coefficient analysis indicates that all leadership variables significantly influence job satisfaction, with SL having the most substantial impact, followed by LSF, TF, and TR. The findings assess that IT sector employees prioritize leaders who provide support, adaptability, and situational responsiveness. TF and TR contribute positively; however, their influence is relatively modest, suggesting that vision and rewards alone are insufficient to maintain satisfaction in the IT sector.

Table 5 Hypothesis testing

Hy-potesis	Statement	Stan-darized Coefi-cient (β)	pvalue	Remarks
HA1	Transformational leadership has a significant effect on job satisfaction.	0.162	0	Ac-cepted
HA2	There is a signifi-cant effect of transactional leadership on job satisfaction.	0.082	0.003	Accepted
HA3	Laissez-faire leadership has a significant influence on job satisfaction.	0.233	0	Accepted
HA4	There is a signif-icant relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.	0.494	0	Accepted

Servant leadership and laissez-faire were highly preferred among

Effective IT leadership necessitates a shift from purely visionary or technical management to a situational, adaptive model that prioritizes Servant Leadership driven by empathy and trust and Laissez-faire autonomy, as these supportive and flexible approaches more significantly impact job satisfaction and innovation than traditional transformational or transactional styles.

The study confirms that Servant Leadership (SL) and Laissez-faire Leadership (LSL) are the most effective drivers of job satisfaction in the IT sector due to their emphasis on support and autonomy

Servant leadership has the greatest impact, underscoring that prioritizing employee well-being and support significantly boosts job satisfaction. Laissez-faire leadership exerts a more decisive influence than transactional leadership, suggesting that autonomy and decision-making freedom can enhance satisfaction. Transformational leadership shows a positive effect, highlighting the role of inspiration and vision in improving satisfaction. Transactional leadership also has a significant but relatively weaker effect, suggesting that rewards and clear structures contribute modestly. The findings provide an intricate summary of how various leadership styles individually impact employee satisfaction in the IT sector, demonstrating that leadership is not a constant factor.

Discussion

The study highlights that leadership in the IT industry is most effective when it balances empowerment, flexibility, and structured support to enhance job satisfaction. Among leadership styles, servant leadership emerges as the strongest predictor, emphasizing empathy, trust, and

employee well-being, which aligns with Social Exchange Theory. Laissez-faire leadership ranks second, reflecting the importance of autonomy and independence in IT environments where employees value creativity and self-direction. Transformational leadership, although important, shows only a moderate impact, suggesting that inspiration alone is insufficient without practical support. Transactional leadership has the weakest yet significant effect, indicating that rewards and structure contribute to satisfaction but do not ensure long-term engagement.

This study differs from previous empirical evidence on leadership and employee outcomes. Transformational leadership is widely used in Bangladeshi SMEs and the IT industry, where it reduces talent loss (Yu et al., 2024). Our findings show that TF leadership is essential but has little impact on IT job satisfaction. The study supports (Joshi & Subedi, 2024) finding that emphasizes the role of mindfulness in improving emotional regulation, collaboration, and reducing stress among IT professionals. Contrary to the belief that technical expertise alone drives success, the results confirm that leadership plays a critical role in employee satisfaction. Overall, effective IT leadership requires a situational, adaptive approach that combines support, flexibility, and empowerment to foster innovation, loyalty, and sustained organizational performance.

Conclusion

The study confirms that leadership styles significantly influence job satisfaction among IT employees, with SL and LSF being the most effective due to their focus on support, flexibility, and autonomy. While TF and TR leadership have some impact, they lack strong human-centric elements. The findings highlight that adaptive, situational leadership is essential in modern IT environments shaped by remote and hybrid work. Effective leaders not only enhance satisfaction but also foster skill development and career growth. However, the study's cross-sectional design and dynamic IT context limit generalization, suggesting future research should explore remote and gig-based work settings.

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